

Well, it's been a busy summer and I'll start where I left off with our last episode. It was June 18th and we were headed into the Little Horn with two pickups loaded with supplies for the Rock Cabin Park camp. The road into the Little Horn had finally melted out enough two days earlier that we could finally get through the snow banks. Brendon, Trenton, and Daniel Fuller had ridden up the canyon the day before with 4 pack mules loaded with supplies for the camp. They were going to patch the big mess tent and put the water line together and do what they could until we arrived the next day. They rode into the Little Horn cow camp to spend the night and got in just at dark. We arrived the next day and started the process of packing down all of the material needed to put up the tents, the groceries for the upcoming trips and also the materials needed to put in the new water tanks. I purchased two new mules this spring and even though they weren't real big, thought it would be the perfect time to give them a try before the trip actually started. At that point in time we called them Donkey and Shrek. Three days later their names are Sinker and Floater. Brendon and Trent started packing the mules and I drove the pickup back to the Little Horn Meadows to get another load of supplies. The smallest mule, (Sinker) was loaded with a propane bottle on each side and the paper goods loaded on as a top pack. They tailed her into the other mules and started to cross the Little Horn River. Now the river was roaring from all of the May snow that we had. The day before they had to put a rope on Maverick and drag him across as there was no way he was going to cross on his own. They said even with the rope the current swept him down over the rapids where they pulled him out. As Sinker started into the swiftest part of the river she let the current push her down over the first set of rapids where her feet went out from under her. Now being tailed to the mule in front of her and with the packs on there was no way she could get back on her feet. She couldn't even raise her head enough to clear the water to get some air. Brendon bailed off his horse, jerking his knife as he went and jumped into the river. With the drowning mule blocking the current, and Brendon slashing with his knife he was able to cut the packs off and then the lead rope. As each pack came loose they bobbed to the top and off down the river they went, with the packages of paper plates, bowls, and napkins. Once the lead rope was cut the mule gave a struggle, bobbed to the top, and then the current crashed her over the rapids and down the river she went, rolling over and over. After about 30 yards she managed to get to her feet and stagger to the bank of the river where she collapsed on the bank gasping for air. At this point in time they didn't know if she was going to live or not. About then people realized they had to try and salvage the rest of the wreck. With long poles they ran down the river trying to get the propane tanks back and the paper goods. It's hard to believe but they did manage to get everything out of the river. Because the paper goods were all in plastic most of them survived and other than a few dents in the propane tanks, they were fine. After a while, Sinker got to her feet and just stood there and shook. We left her just standing there for a couple of hours before we tried to do anything else with her. Then on the last day as we were headed back to camp I was leading the other mule and she managed to allow the current to push her below the first set of rapids. She stuck a back leg under a big boulder and there it was stuck. Now the river had gone down about 8 inches in those three days so this little story isn't nearly as exciting. When she realized that the leg was stuck she just sat down in the river. Sitting exactly like a dog she just sat there. With the water filling the packs full I thought maybe we were going to get a repeat of a couple of days earlier. The main difference was that I was mounted so I dallied the

lead rope around my saddle horn to keep the situation from getting any worse. As long as I was dallied I knew I could keep her head above water. She tried 3 different times to pull her leg out from under the boulder. I knew that if I were to drag her out that I would surely break her leg, so all I could do was sit there and give her time to figure it out. On the fourth try she managed to pull it out at exactly the same angle that it went in, and out it came. She then stood up and calmly walked out of the river.

On the 4th of July I had told the crew they could have the day off if we got everything done from the June trip. That meant the supply trailer cleaned out, inventoried, and all of the tents hung to make sure they wouldn't mildew. We also had 6 loads of horses to haul off the mountain to get ready for the next trip. Now the 6 loads of horses wouldn't have seemed so large except, we had lost the breaks on the other pickup two days before the first trip and of course didn't have anyway to get them in and have them repaired during the trip. Is what that meant was that we were going to have to haul all of the horses off the mountain with one pickup. Now it takes just about 4 hours to make a round trip. I couldn't sleep the night of the third as my mind was already running on the logistics of the next trip. Finally around 2:00 am I decided this was stupid to just lay their in bed so I got up and headed to the mountain for the last load of horses. I was back to make breakfast at 6:00 am. By doing this everyone could have the day off. That evening around 8:00 pm the phone rang and it was a neighbor calling to say we had a slug of steers in his pasture. That meant breakfast the next day was going to be at dark thirty. The pasture where the steers are is a new lease so I wasn't really sure where this other fella's pasture was other than it was somewhere north of where our steers were supposed to be. Brendon, Trent, Taylor, Chelsie, Tyler and I headed there the next morning. We started gathering steers as soon as we arrived in the first pasture north of where the steers were supposed to be. Taylor and I headed on North and Brendon, Trent, Chelsie, and Tyler started gathering the drainage just west of us where I could see lots of cattle. There is lots of Methane development in that country so there are new roads everywhere. As they dig these they dig a small settling pond beside each well. As soon as they do this they fence them off with wire panels to keep livestock from bogging down in them trying to reach water. Surface water is scarce in that part of the country so as they dig these settling ponds it really attracts the cattle as they can smell the water. As Brendon and Trent rode up to the first one sure enough here is one of our steers in it and bogged down to the point that all could be seen was the top of his back and his head which was just barely above mud line. This steer was somewhat bloated so they figured he had been bogged down around 18 hours. He was just about exhausted to the point that he couldn't hold his head above the water. They hooked two ropes around his neck and with two horses pulling couldn't budge him. By the time they were through choking him he couldn't hold his head above water so Tyler lay on his belly and held the steers head up while Brendon went looking for a pickup to hook to the steer. When Brendon found a methane field worker he told him he needed to borrow his pickup to pull a steer out of one of their mud pits. He was very accommodating (what he didn't know was that Brendon was going to use his pickup even if the guy said no) and called his boss to tell him where he was going and Brendon overheard the boss say: Are they mad? Anyway, they pulled the steer out and today he is on the mountain. Now Tyler looked like he was ready to do some serious mud wrestling by the time they got the steer out. All you could see was two blue eyes peeking out of this moving mound of earth! After all of the

excitement of pulling the steer out of the mud it was getting to hot to see many cattle for the day. They headed back to pickup waiting for me to show up. I was about an hour behind them with the cattle that I had found. Between us we had picked up 38 head of steers. The only problem was that I didn't feel comfortable that we had seen things well. With the upcoming trip just days away we needed to get the steers found. Taylor drew the short straw and had to ride with me the next two days at 3:30am to try and find the missing steers. After two more rides and ending up 4 miles north of the pasture where the steers were supposed to be we had gathered another 98 steers. From the looks of things we were starting to get close to our tally. The last day it was around 95 degrees and Taylor was worn out and I said I knew of one more water hole I wanted to check. There happened to be a road that went by that particular water hole so we drove to it, and sure enough here were 4 more steers standing their grinning. I jumped my tired pony out of the trailer and the look on Taylor's face said, "Dad do I have to"? He did look spent, so I said why you don't drive the pickup back and unload, and when I arrive you can help me put the steers back through the gate into the pasture. Now I don't think Taylor had ever driven the pickup pulling the trailer but I thought since we were out in the middle of nowhere what could it hurt. Boy, was I mistaken. He opened the gate and then drove through not thinking that the trailer is a good foot wider than the pickup on both sides. He sheared a railroad tie off right at the ground when he drove through. He couldn't have broken it off any cleaner than he did. The whole brace was completely removed. You could now put a combine with a 40 ft head through the gate. I wasn't too concerned about the combine but was rather concerned about the yearlings that we had just gathered and put back in the pasture. The trucks were supposed to be there the next morning to haul the cattle to my place to be ready for the July trip. We propped the gate shut and hoped a mad grasshopper didn't come by and knock it open. Luck was on our side as all the yearlings were there the next morning. The scary part is the fact that my one good piece of luck was now used up and we are only half through the year!!

The July trip went off without a hitch except we had a small taste of hell! The day we went up the canyon there were two different readings in the valley. One showed 112 and the other 116. I have never had a whole herd of cattle try and quit on us. Anywhere there was a shadow cattle would be pushing and shoving to try and get into the shade. We had no choice but to keep pushing.

SMOKY THE DRUANN:

Aug 6th Krayton and Family got a wild hair and called all the family and said lets all go to cow camp for the weekend and have a small family reunion and reroof the cabin and build a deck at the same time. All of the family was there with lots on hammers, noise, swearing and all of the other things that go along with carpentry. We built a deck the same size as the cabin and it is really a great improvement.

Over the Labor Day weekend we as ranchers were still laboring as we were gathering the cattle out of Lake Creek and kicking them into the Lick Creek drainage. Krayton, Druann and Tyler came in on Sunday while we were out gathering cattle. Krayton always looking for something to do started digging a new out house hole and Druann was doing some touch up painting on the cabin. Druann went in and got some things out of the cabin and about 5 minutes later decided she needed some gloves so back in the cabin

she went to find the cabin filled with smoke and a blaze started behind the propane refrigerator. She screamed fire and Tyler came running, grabbed the wash basin and headed to the spring for water. There was so much smoke he couldn't see where the water buckets were in the cabin. Luckily with his 42 in inseam it didn't take long to get to the spring and back with his half gallon of water sloshing all the way in the basin. He threw it on the fire behind the refrigerator and luckily it was enough to put out the fire. As the smoke cleared they realized that the plastic fruit drawer had been pushed behind the refrigerator and the flame had finally ignited it. Had Druann been a few seconds later it would have burned through the rubber hose that goes to the propane bottle and then the fire would have been wild. I had my pickup parked right beside the cabin so we would have burned it up in the process not to mention the forest fire that we would have had to fight, then pay for. So we smile and feel assured that the good Lord is watching over us.

LOCAL NEWS: Some of you might be aware that a group of environmentalist has filed a lawsuit claiming that the Big Horn National Forest is one of the twelve most endangered forests in the United States due to mainly two things. (1) Roads which will lead to logging because the forest has increased the total of harvestable timber from 3 million board foot the last 10 years to 9 million board foot for the next 10 years. (2) Grazing is having a negative effect on the environment. Now remember, we have been grazing the Big Horns for 115 years. It's hard for me to take these nuts seriously but there are a lot of judges that are nuts so it is a very serious issue. The fear is that some judge will file an injunction to stop grazing until he can determine the true effect and at that point in time they have won as most of us will be out of business because without grass we have nothing. DOES AN ENDANGERED MOUNTAIN BECOME EXCTINCT IF THEY ARE RIGHT? DO THE TREES ALL DISSAPEAR AND THE MOUNTAINS FLATTEN OUT SO THAT WE COULD SEE THE TOWNS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN IF THEY BECOME EXCTINCT? It is so difficult to continue to try and operate knowing that at any point in time some outsider who has nothing invested has the power to take my home and land away from me.

A recent study in California has just been released and their conclusion was that grazing actually enhances some endangered species. That is a first and what we ranchers have been saying for years. In this particular case it is a certain Salamander and some type of shrimp but at least it's positive about grazing. Don't forget that the cloven hoof is Mother Nature's cultivator.

NEXT YEARS DATES: JUNE 25-JULY 1
 JULY 9- JULY 15 (WYO RODEO INCL.)
 AUG 6, - AUG 12TH
 SEPT 16,- SEPT 23
CLEAN UP OCT 1- OCT 6

*******BRAND NEW*****PACK TRIPS MID JUNE THRU MID AUG**
AVAILABLE ON NON CATTLE DRIVE WEEKS ONLY
4 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS \$785.00 (THE KIDS WILL BE DOING THIS)

**Any of you past guests who are planning on coming next year please let me know as soon as possible even if it's just an email saying so. I'm trying to avoid some problems that occurred last year.

Those of you that ordered hats, tee shirts, jackets and so forth I have finally gotten around to getting them ordered, so they are on the way. Thanks for your patience. Having a USFS forest permit is like going through a annual 6 month IRS audit. That is one of the reasons why it has been so long since the last newsletter. I know that my weakest link is not getting the video, hats and so forth out on a more timely fashion. It is one of my goals to improve on next year. I'm headed to town today and it will be the first time in 18 days since I've been to town. Like most cowboys, I am very content with my own company. Well, until the next time take care, God Bless and be safe.

Dana